

ZIGZAG

In the woods we return to reason and faith.

—Ralph Waldo Emerson

I walk down county backroads along zigzag fences, thinking each angled section adds support like an extended farm family where each does a bewildering medley of chores. I remember mama asking me to sleep in the barn during lambing season, help deliver ewes, bottle feed puley lambs, warm newborns with fresh straw and song, and then, the cows, there's always one mother who won't claim her calf. Once the breeding season's over we'd move our horses down to one pasture, this was the time, at last, for father's invitation for me to ride with him for strays. He'd be in his Batwing chaps with bedroll, scattering yelps of our Catahoula cow dogs who scour and shoo the cattle from sparse grass and Checo Bush. . . .

At morning light father made flapjacks with wild pig grease, almost as good as mother's. We'd stay in old abandoned bunkhouses on the range of night, stars sprinkled through broken roofs, father's slow voice between puffed glow of pipe, "Your teacher says your grades are high, son, have you ever thought of what you'd like to do or be?" Down county backroads where you can see the bottom of each stream in the cold, clear water, I'd think of father's words, trace with my walking stick my name in dust, touch the angled zigzag fences wondering where my life had gone.

Born in 1919, I am perhaps one of Marvin Malone's older poets. I was with expatriate American poets and writers in 1952 when Jack Kerouac lived on Calle Arizaba, Mexico City. We all owe a debt to Marvin Malone. Almost single-handedly he motivated and liberated thousands of poets who would follow the *épater le bourgeois* freedom of Charles Henry Bukowski. Marvin was one of the few editors who took time and concern for his contributors. I still have his penciled notes on poems that didn't make it and

those that he thought had a chance for print. During the two years my wife Marysia and I lived on our boat at the Waterfront Yacht Harbor, Stockton, I respected his rule of not publishing those who lived within his publishing base. When we moved back to the coast, I was delighted to return to the pages of the WORMWOOD REVIEW, a literary family where I felt I belonged. You had to have a little piranha juice in your poetic food change to climb over the PARIS REVIEW and the NEW YORKER for the absolute thrill of being in the WORMWOOD REVIEW. T. S. Eliot said, "What life have you if you love not life together? There is no life that is not in community." Marvin knew this when he nurtured and sustained a community of poets who literally emblazoned American literature. I'm thankful to have been in that number.

—Ray Clark Dickson

San Luis Obispo, CA

MARVIN MALONE

I can't imagine him not there, the P.O. box up in Stockton not waiting.

I can't imagine his Wormwood's demise—no more Buk or Locklin or Wilma Elizabeth or Voss or Smith coming to me through the mail.

So I imagine him now, sitting on a cloud with Bukowski, with cigars and maybe a bit of wine, smiling, watching all this earthbound tomfoolery, taking his rest in good company, waiting for us all.

I still have that first acceptance letter from Marvin Malone. "You're in Wormwood!" he wrote. Those three words—and his subsequent gentle guidance and encouragement—changed my life, set me off on a task of creating a world of Ruth and Ellis, enriching immeasurably my existence.

Thank you, Marvin Malone. Thank you.

—Dan Lenihan

Oceanside, CA